

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Inez Connor 202/343-5634

## BOBCAT EXPORTS APPROVED FOR ALL BUT 5 STATES, PORTIONS OF TEXAS, OREGON

Bobcat pelts taken this season can be exported beginning in the next week or 10 days from all States except Florida, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New Mexico, the "eastern region" of Oregon, and the "high plains ecological area" of Texas, under a December 12 ruling by Judge June L. Green of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C.

Exports of all bobcat pelts taken during the 1979-80 season have been blocked since November 9 when the Court issued a temporary restraining order in the lawsuit brought by the Defenders of Wildlife alleging that the Government had insufficient data to assure that exports would not be detrimental to the survival of the species. The suit was filed against the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Endangered Species Scientific Authority. The ESSA is a 7-member interagency committee that advises the Service on whether exports can be allowed without being detrimental to the survival of species listed under the 54-nation treaty, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The ESSA based its advice to the Service on information submitted by the various States and the public. The lawsuit did not involve the domestic law, the Endangered Species Act.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials said it would take some time to figure out how to administer the Court's ruling on the "high plains ecological area" of Texas to assure that no bobcats are exported from two non-contiguous areas in the upper northwest corner of the State. Officials indicated there should be no serious problem with the Oregon ruling since the State uses different colored tags for the eastern and western parts of Oregon. The judge disallowed exports from portions of the two States because of the presence of two closely related subspecies which according to her finding are rare and cannot withstand the pressure of exports. The two subspecies are Lynx rufus baileyi in Texas and the Lynx rufus pallescens in eastern Oregon.

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Last year, according to statistics reported to the Fish and Wildlife Service, 24,389 bobcat pelts and 411 garments containing the fur were exported from the United States to major European countries, most of which are also signatories to the Convention. Two of the 7 States from which exports remain blocked--New Mexico and Oregon--were among the top 6 exporting States last year. Louisiana led the way with 3,434, followed by New Mexico, 2,525; Georgia, 2,300; Arizona, 2,107; California, 1,891; and Oregon, 1,022. Fur experts place the value of bobcat pelts at \$200-\$250 each to the trapper.

The judge enjoined the Fish and Wildlife Service from "issuing export permits and from otherwise allowing the export of bobcat pelts taken during the 1979-80 season" from the other 5 States for the following reasons:

Wisconsin: "Trapping pressure is increasing and the harvest is declining throughout much of the State, particularly the northern regions where the bobcat was formerly common." According to statistics reported to the FWS, Wisconsin exported 8 bobcat pelts during calendar year 1978.

Florida: "The Court is not satisfied that an appraisal of the bobcats' status in Florida is sufficient to support a finding of no-detriment...There are no bag or possession limits."

New Mexico: "Presently, the State of New Mexico is without authority to manage the bobcat, since it is classified as a predator...There are no bag or possession limits. What recent harvest data the State had in its possession had not been analyzed at the time New Mexico made its submission to ESSA."

North Dakota: "Knowledge of the bobcat in North Dakota is minimal. Population densities are not available and statewide distribution is imprecisely known...no bag or possession limits." North Dakota exported 20 pelts last year.

Massachusetts: "Population estimates are tenuous and outdated and based on troublesome assumptions. The most recent age structure analysis of that population is unsatisfactory." There are no statistics on exports from Massachusetts for last year.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is notifying State fish and game officials of the Court's ruling and expects to complete the necessary paperwork within the next week or 10 days to allow exports to resume.

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